

**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
AND CONSERVATION**  
**Forestry Division**



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**Scoping Notice:**

June 08, 2020

The Forestry Division of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is proposing to offer financial assistance to mitigate the risk from wildland fire to communities and residents in Montana. Through a partnership with the US Forest Service State & Private Forestry, these funds are applied for and awarded through the DNRC's Hazardous Fuels Reduction Grant program.

Fire suppression efforts over the past century, coupled with past management practices and forest growth have led to hazardous fuel conditions in forests across Montana. Increased development in the wildland urban interface coupled with hazardous fuel loading has increased the risk of wildfire to communities, homes, and other highly valued resources and assets. Grant funds from this program support reducing hazardous fuel conditions on private lands to establish fire adapted communities and restore fire-adapted ecosystems in the wildland urban interface.

Located in the Holmes Gulch Road area of northern Jefferson County, the purpose of the proposed project is to reduce wildfire risk to private homes near the community of Helena by managing hazardous fuel conditions on 60 acres of private land. Tree thinning, pruning, and mechanical chipping/mastication are the proposed management methods. The area is predominately ponderosa pine overstory with a densely overstocked understory of regenerating ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. A local cooperator would administer these grant funds directly to landowner recipients through project agreements as part of a cost-share incentive for reducing wildfire risk on their property. The project would be implemented in the summer of 2020 and completed by the end of 2021. If funded, the prescription would be to reduce the density of trees and ladder fuels to reduce the likelihood of high-severity wildfire and mimic historic conditions of a ponderosa pine forest; promoting age-class and species diversity.

The proposed action, *to award grant funding*, would contribute to the DNRC meeting goals and objectives identified in Forests in Focus 2.0 and the Montana Forest Action Plan. The DNRC invites your comment on the proposed action in order to comply with the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). Please respond by end of business June 17, 2020 to:

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